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Humanities

How and why did USA get involved in the Vietnam War?

The Vietnam, in south- East Asia was part of the old French colony which as also called Indo-china. By the Second World War the Japanese had power over Vietnam and the Vietminh was lead by their leader Ho Chi Minh. Ho Chi Minh was a communist. Ho Chi Minh was born in 1890 and was the son of a peasant in Vietnam. Once a teacher in Vietnam he left Vietnam for Europe in 1911 to be a kitchen boy for a French ship. He moved up from being a kitchen boy to a pastry cook in a London Hotel, but was very fascinated in politics. He became a communist because he was promised that Russia would assist all people struggling to free them form foreign rule. The Vietminh first started a guerilla war against the French after 1945. Guerilla warfare is an irregular warfare, conflicts in which a small group combatant uses military supplies.

America felt threatened towards its national interest although they were far away, to begin to fight a war with Vietnam. The Communist were becoming very power and taking over china, the Korean War and destroying the French in the Vietnam War left many Americans to think that they could take over the world. That by helping the Southern Vietnamese government prevent the attack of the communist north that they would be saving their tails by preventing a communist world in every country. The United States was not going to allow anymore countries to become communist and was going to contain the expansion of communist. In the Cold War, 1949 was a bad year for the USA due to the exploded atom boom by the USSR which made the USA takes in account they were not the only one with nuclear weapons. At this time china became communist and the US spent two billion supporting the ant- communists. The French was disapproved by the USA, but communist china began supporting Vietminh, which lead to the USA having to spend five hundred million in The French war efforts. The USA helped the French set up a non-Communist government in the south of the country.

The French was defeated by the Dien Bien Phu in 1954. The Geneva Agreement in 1954 divided Vietnam into South and North Vietnam. Indo- China was divided into four countries: Laos, Cambodia, North Vietnam and South Vietnam. After the defeat of the French, President Eisenhower outlines the Domino Theory. "You have a row of dominoes set up. You knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly.” Mr. Eisenhower believed that the Domino effect would be South Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Burma the India. This was because he believed all the countries in South East Asia were closely linked together and if one country in the South East Asia were to fall to communism then the others would follow along. America supported Diem by spending money, supplies and military equipment. In 1959, communist government in N Vietnam ordered the Vietminh to begin a terror campaign against Diem’s government.

Ngo Dinh Diem who was a fanatical catholic and as communism hated religion, Diem hated that entire communism stood for. This is why he got America's support - he had a poor record on Human rights but his rule was in the era of the "Domino Theory" and anybody who was anticommunist in the Far East was likely to receive American backing - regardless of their less than savory background. Ngro ruled as a dictator with his brother. The National Liberation Front in 1960 was set in South Vietnam to Overthrow Diem, gets rid of Americans and unites South and North Vietnam.

John F. Kennedy became President of the United States of America in 1960. He increased the number of military advisors 100 to 1600 by 1963. Also he helped to equip South Vietnamese army. By 1961 the US spent two hundred and seventy million in military support for Diem. The Strategic hamlet programmed was created to save the peasant from the Viet Cong; Diem organized a system whereby whole villages were moved into defended camps known as fortified villagers but didn’t turn out to have worked due to the fact the peasants didn’t want to leave their land. For Viet Cong this was working well because h promised more land once communism was taken into South Vietnam.

In 1963, President Johnson became president and Diem's unpopularity was so great that in November 1963, the South Vietnamese Army overthrew and killed him. The confusion at a political level in South Vietnam and the abuse of peasant’s rights within the agricultural community were two reasons for the spread of communism within the south. This was a rude waking to the American President, Lyndon Johnson and he instructed his military chiefs to construct plans if a full-scale war breaks out. Johnson didn’t think the South Vietnamese government was able to keep the North Vietnamese out of the South. On July 1964, the US military prepared for the bombing of North Vietnam. The Tonkin Incident occurred when two American ships were attacked by North

Vietnamese gunboats while they were in international waters. The American Senate gave Johnson the power to give armed support to assist any country requesting help in defense of its freedom. On March 1965, the first American ground troops landed in South Vietnam and by December 1965, there were 150,000 stationed in the country. The bombing of North Vietnam had already started in February 1965. This

Bombing was given the name ‘Operation Rolling Thunder’.

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